

help keep our progress strong and our prosperity going in the years ahead.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process**

*December 15, 2000*

I am delighted that loyalist paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland have today committed themselves to an open-ended cessation of hostilities and developed peaceful mechanisms to address disputes that may arise. This action responds to the overwhelming desire of the people of Northern Ireland to see their peace flourish and endure, which I sensed during my visit this week. I congratulate the loyalist political leaders who I know worked so hard to bring this about.

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### **The President's Radio Address**

*December 16, 2000*

Good morning. This week, as I work to conclude the last budget negotiations of my Presidency, I'm reminded how far we've come these past 8 years. We now live in a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. But we didn't get there by accident. We made tough choices, based on core values of opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and a community of all Americans.

Today I want to talk about two elements critical to our continued success: first, our progress in moving people from welfare to work; and second, our continuing commitment to fiscal discipline and a budget that puts our people first.

Vice President Gore and I took office in 1993 with a pledge to end welfare as we know it. Thanks to comprehensive welfare reform, a renewed sense of responsibility, and the strongest economy in a generation, millions of former welfare recipients now know the dignity of work.

Today I am pleased to announce that over the past 8 years we've cut welfare caseloads by more than 8 million people. Last year alone 1.2 million parents on welfare went to work, determined to build better lives. Nationwide over the last 8 years, welfare rolls have dropped nearly 60 percent and now are the lowest in more than 30 years.

We've been able to sustain this progress year after year because Government, the private sector, and welfare recipients themselves all have done their parts. Together, we are finally breaking the cycle of dependence that has long crippled the hopes of too many families.

When we enacted landmark welfare reform in 1996, I insisted that Congress provide incentives to reward States for helping people to find jobs and to keep jobs. Today I'm pleased to announce that 28 States will receive a total of \$200 million in bonuses for doing just that. These grants will enable States to help even more parents go to work and succeed on the job. I urge States to use these resources to provide the necessary support—from child care to transportation to training—that can make a critical difference between welfare checks and paychecks.

We've also worked hard to help families leaving welfare meet the challenge of affordable health care. In the bipartisan budget package I will soon sign, we will extend Medicaid coverage so that thousands of parents who leave welfare can keep the health coverage protecting them and their children. This budget also includes funding to help cover more uninsured children, speed coverage for patients with Lou Gehrig's disease, and increase payments to hospitals, teaching facilities, home health agencies, and nursing homes in order to ensure quality health care.

We have also secured an extra \$817 million to help working families afford child care, to meet their responsibilities both at work and at home. These and other child care resources will serve over 2.2 million children next year.

In this budget, we're also passing our historic new markets and community renewal initiative, the most significant effort ever to help hard-pressed communities lift themselves up through private investment and entrepreneurship. With the help of our new-